**Ancient Egypt L.E.G.S. Essay**

**"In order to maintain order and stability, how have past civilizations arranged different groups and their responsibilities (society), organized power to control their populations (government and law), and extended power over other lands (empire)?"**

Prologue

The civilization of Egypt began along the Nile River in Egypt about 6,500 years ago, or in about 4,540 B.C. It began 2000 years after farming started in Catal Huyuk, and 1500 years after the civilizations in Mesopotamia began. Early Egyptian society developed in the Old Kingdom, and turned into a powerful empire in the New Kingdom era. It obviously developed from a small civilization, to a sprawling empire.

The Government and Law of Egypt

Before the Old Kingdom started, Egypt was divided into two regions, upper [south] Egypt, and lower [northern] Egypt. King Menes of Upper Egypt led his armies into Lower Egypt and conquered it wholesale in 3100 B.C.! He made a new crown that was the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. It was called the crown of unified Egypt. Menes was the first Pharaoh of the Old Kingdom Era in Egypt. The Old Kingdom lasted from 2700 B.C. to 2200 B.C. There were many pharaohs of Egypt in all three of the eras of Egypt. The word Pharaoh referred to “the great palace” in which the pharaoh lived. It later became the name of all Egyptian rulers or kings. In the beginning of Egyptian civilization, the Pharaohs dealt with trade, religion, and local governments. As Egyptian civilization developed, the Pharaoh became the center of Egyptian civilization. He was the leader of the Egyptian religion, leader of trade, overseer of productions, and many more positions. One very important one was that he controlled the waterways and made sure that the water got equally distributed to farmers across the country.

One assistant of the Pharaoh was called the Grand Vizier. He was the Pharaoh’s chief scribe. There were two of them, one for the south, and one for the north. He was the modern “prime minister” of the Egyptian government. The vizier was always a member of the royal family who ruled Egypt. He oversaw all economic matters of the nomes of Egypt. He controlled all of the jobs, temples, farms, and more things in the nomes.

Egypt also had laws which were displayed in public places so that the population could see. One example is an Egyptian law code in their Nubian territory in 1280 B.C. It told about if people stole goods that weren’t theirs from the Nubian Estate owned by the gods [because the Pharaoh was looked upon as a divine god on Earth]. One law that he stated was that nobody could steal people from the estate by capture. It also states that is someone disrespects the Pharaoh’s boundary line; they shall have their ears cut off and be forced to work on the Pharaoh’s fields. Lastly, one law states that nobody can steal the pharaoh’s slaves.

The Middle Kingdom Era in Egypt started in 2000 B.C. This era struck in new innovations in ruling and dealings with outside countries which led to weakness, which eventually led to the Hyksos ruling over Lower Egypt. The Pharaoh gave Egyptian citizens new rights, and replaced regional leaders with governors who reported individually to him. They also got direct orders from him. Trade also prospered during this era. This led to Asian people settling in the Nile Delta, who were the Hyksos who took control of the Nile Delta, crippling Egypt. This marked the end of the Middle Kingdom. The Egyptian Pharaohs also had much advancement in the Egyptian New Kingdom in their new territories that will be described in the Empire section.

Egyptian Society

A social pyramid is a “Pyramid” with different levels of society that classify the population into levels. One ideal near-Egyptian social pyramid comes from Meroe, a Kushite [Upper Nubian] city. It is very much like the Egyptian social pyramid; actually, it’s pretty much exactly the same! The top level of the four-level pyramid is the small, elite level that contains the royal family [King, Queen, Princes, and Princesses]. They were in control of the empire. The second level was the nobility, priests, and soldiers. These were the most powerful citizens that weren’t in the royal family. The soldiers were police forces, defense forces, or attack forces. The priests ran the royal temples and public temples. The nobility were the very wealthy citizens or aristocrats who were in control of singular farm system or other businesses and corporation. The third level was the level of the standard citizens who occupied the bulk of the jobs. They were artisans, craftsmen, tradesmen, farmers, and more common jobs. They were the ones who really sustained the economy. The final level is the level of the enslaved population [slaves]. They did the grunt work for construction projects and did house work, or labor/basic city maintenance. This was the basic Egyptian social pyramid.

Egyptian Conquest and Empire

When the Asian Hyksos took control of the Nile River Delta, the people of Upper Egypt began to rebel. The Nile River Delta was Egypt’s most valued possession. Without it they were isolated from trade and foreign affairs. In the height of its power, the Hyksos sent a message to Nubia that asked if they wanted to become allies against Egypt and attack it from both sides, cutting it in half for the Nubians and the Hyksos to rule. When the Egyptians caught the Hyksos messenger, the Egyptians launched an attack on the Hyksos in 1570, led by the young Pharaoh Ahmose I, whose relatives died fighting the Hyksos. His armies were successful in defeating the Hyksos. Then, he turned his attention to forging a great, Egyptian empire.

After the Hyksos were driven out of Egypt, the Egyptian conquered Israel, Lebanon, western Syria, Nubia, and Kush. This greatly extended their trade routes to other African civilizations beyond the Nile. The Egyptians gained many resources from the places that they conquered too. From Nubia and Kush, Egypt got: gold, ebony, ivory, animal hides, copper, and precious stones. From Lebanon and Greece [a distant trading partner] they got silver, olive oil, copper, timber, and wine. Later in the New Kingdom, Hatshepsut, one of the only female Pharaohs of Egypt launched an epic trading expedition; instead of proving herself in military conquest, to the land of Punt. Punt is located in modern day Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. From this place, the soldier and officials brought back: gold, perfume, ivory, incense, apes, other animals, and special trees and plants. Her reign was full of power and wealth for the Egyptian Empire. Another famous Pharaoh of the Egyptian New Kingdom was Amenhotep I who made many allies in the Mediterranean and Africa. He also built great Egyptian temples in Karnak and in Nubia that instilled a sense of being ruled by Egypt into the hearts and minds of the Nubians. The last strong ruler of the Egyptian Empire was Ramses II. He ruled over Egypt for 67 years!!The New Kingdom collapsed 100 years after his death. He wasn’t that strong of a ruler though. He lied about an “incredible” victory against the far superior Hittite Empire. In fact, the Egyptians were getting desperate in the battle, and only won the battle by a stroke of luck. He did build many monuments and raised the morale of the Egyptian society. He also made a peace treaty with the Hittites after the battle.